

Besides the interlocking cycles of local markets many villages and all cycles have links with the larger centers of the export-import trade of Bornu Province. If there are roads, trucks bring out goods and people from the city at least once a week and take back locally produced things to the city. Where there are no roads the camel caravan and donkey load do the same job they have done for centuries. Where the market is too small or too remote, then the interlocking nature of the cycle brings and takes goods to a larger place on a main route.

Markets, especially those on motor roads, tend to set the pattern or rhythm of intersettlement communication and travel. Thus if Bukar of Magumeri wishes to take several bags of millet to Yerwa (the usual name for Maiduguri), he knows that he can get a lorry at the Thursday, Sunday, or Monday markets which will take him and his goods to the capital. Again if Bukar's sister is coming to visit him from the capital or some other distant place in Bornu, she will arrive on a market day. If a man's wife wishes to divorce him or he her, she must wait until market day to leave him in order to obtain proper transportation back to her relatives if they live in some distant part of the province. Thus the market cycle plus the presence of lorries and roads determines a large part of the rhythm of rural life and this in turn adds zest, interest, and excitement to market days. Beyond this rhythmic quality markets are also major sources of news and gossip about politics, marriages, births, circumcisions, and deaths. Pagans brew beer for sale on the local market day, and gamblers hold card games in the nearby bush area. Gambling, strangers, new bits of gossip, perhaps a new woman or two, drummers and entertainers, all contribute and create not just an ordinary day for buying and selling goods, but a festive occasion that is regarded as a welcome break or relief in the daily monotony of rural life.

Most markets have very little formal organization. Each one has its head man or "big man of the market" to whom disputes are referred, and if he cannot settle the disagreement, then it is taken to the head of the village or to the judge if the village boasts a regular Moslem court. In the capital city the market is so large and disputes so frequent that there is a special court nearby to handle market affairs. In the market itself, each variety of thing being sold has its own section, and, as in the village, the butcher's section is generally on the lee side (southwest) of the market site. In the larger villages market fees are taken from sellers who use the stalls, but this is uncommon in small centers where they just take the first one available as long as they restrict themselves to that section of the market given over to their particular type of selling.

Prices vary with the season, the time of day, and how common the item is. Taking the last point first, a fancy imported man's robe may have a relatively wide price range since not many people buy these, and the seller tries to charge as much as he can. At the other end are items like boxes of sugar cubes which everyone buys regularly. The prices of such items are well known and people do not haggle over them at all but simply give the money to the seller since both know the standard price. Some food commodities such as millet and guinea corn are sold in the Magumeri market at a flat price for a small gourd-full of grain, but the prices vary for a bag of grain over the year. In order to keep prices constant sellers simply vary the size of the gourd. In general, food prices rise during the growing season when they

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88 • THE ECONOMIC LIFE

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435 are scarce and fall again after harvest time, while many material items like jewelry, clothes; etc., are just the opposite, going down in price when cash is scarce and rising later when people have more money after the harvest.

The Organization of Trade

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Looking at Bornu as a whole it is also important to see how trade is organized so that goods can move from one point to another as well as into and out of the society as a whole. The best terms to start with here are "retail" and "wholesale," since the Kanuri themselves see a distinction between selling to ultimate consumers as compared with selling to people who are in turn going to sell the item again. At the local level in a town like Magumeri trade is handled by retailers who sell uncooked foods, medicines, charms, medical services, building services, sundries, etc., directly to consumers and the local householders. Generally speaking goods produced locally are retailed locally, usually by the producers themselves. Thus Ka'anami sells his own calabashes, Mala Bukar his own meat, the blacksmith his own tools, and so on. However goods not produced locally such as salt, textiles, kola nuts, and European manufactured goods, are sold by wholesalers first to local retailers, then by these retailers to the local users. The wholesale relationships between buyers and sellers is a very important one and must be viewed close-up to be appreciated. Let us therefore look at it from the point of view first of the retailer, then a wholesaler, then a "financier" who uses his capital to support wholesale trade.

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MOMADU, THE SALT SELLER Momadu is about sixty years old and has lived in Magumeri for eight years. He comes originally from Hadejia to the west of Bornu where he began selling salt for an Arab trader when he was a teenager. The Arab gave him several bags of salt (100 pounds per bag) on trust, and he would sell it on the market in one-penny lots at a profit of a few shillings a bag for himself. After the salt was sold, he would pay back the Arab. Later he came to Bornu and was given credit by some of his father's brother's sons. However after a while they quarreled over the division of the profits from the salt selling, and he left this group and came to Magumeri. In Magumeri he asked the district head's wife to help him since she was known for her interest in trade. She arranged for one of her servants to go to the capital weekly and buy salt from the Levantine traders. She then distributed these to a number of people, including Momadu, who paid her when the salt was sold.

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Later, when this woman moved away with her husband to another district, Momadu obtained a connection with a wealthy trader in Maiduguri with the help of the district head's wife. This trader sends out a follower each week with five bags of salt and Momadu sells this by visiting local markets during the week. His relationship to his supplier is somewhat impersonal although they trust one another and Momadu pays his respects to his supplier when visiting the city. Momadu says he does not need a very close relationship to his supplier because he already is the *tada njima* or client-follower of Kachella Abba, the head dyer of Magumeri. Momadu has no wife so he eats at Kachella Abba's house, borrows money from him without interest, runs messages for him, and helps Kachella Abba on the latter's

farm. If Kachella Abba were to leave Magumeri, Monadu feels he would move with him. This would not impair his relationship to the salt supplier since that man lives in Maiduguri where he would still have to go to obtain wholesale salt. He says Kachella Abba is his "father" and he would and must serve him and give him respect even though the two men are nearly the same age.

BUKAR, THE "TADA NJIMA" Another example of retailing that shows how it is often imbedded into a more general relationship is that of Bukar. Bukar can be seen three or four days a week walking about the village of Magumeri with a tin of cellophane-wrapped candies. One of the village's household heads goes in and out of the city regularly on messages for the native administration. When in the city he buys a tin or two of candy and brings these back to Magumeri. The boy, Bukar, is about twenty years old; he is not related by descent or marriage to the senior man but lives in his compound and is fed and clothed by the household head. When the senior rides horseback in ceremonies the boy carries his spear and walks behind the horse; he gathers grass for the horse, runs messages for the household head, carries water for the household, and works on the household farm-plots. Receipts from the candy sale are given to the household head who then gives Bukar a small amount for himself. Here the retailing of candy is only one aspect of the relationship between Bukar and his household head. He refers to his superior, the household head, as *abba njima* or father of the house, and says of him, "He is just like my father."

AJIMI, THE KOLA NUT SELLER Next we see a wholesaler who sells directly to retailers in an ancient trade that has always allowed for middlemen by the score because of the vast distances over which it is carried out. Ajimi is a young man of twenty-five or twenty-six who lives with his brothers in a small hamlet just outside Magumeri. For the six to nine months a year when farming is slack, and intermittently while he is farming, Ajimi sells kola nuts to local retailers. Ajimi gets the money from his father's older brother in the city and then buys a *kwando*, a large rope wrapped package of nuts. A *kwando* costs about sixty to seventy dollars and contains roughly 7000 to 8000 nuts. He buys the nuts from traders in the city who ship them into Maiduguri from other parts of Nigeria and West Africa.

Ajimi visits three or four of these traders regularly about twice a month in the dry season. He always goes to all of them, inspects their goods, talks prices, and then decides where to place his order. He does this for two reasons. First there is always some variety in price and quality and he must try to get the best he can of both. Secondly, by going to these same suppliers, among dozens of possible ones, he feels he can build up their confidence in him by selling his stuff well and steadily. Indeed, several of the suppliers have on occasion given him an extra *kwando* on credit and he kept the profits for himself.

Generally Ajimi brings the nuts back in time for Magumeri Sunday market and attends the Thursday and Monday markets as well at nearby towns. He can sell a *kwando* to retailers in about two weeks and make a profit of about thirty dollars, half of which he gives to his father's older brother who supplied the original money. Thus he makes about fifteen dollars for two weeks of wholesaling—if he is lucky and sagacious in his relations to retailers. Retailers can go to several suppliers like Ajimi. They decide on the basis of quality of the nuts, on the price, and whether they can obtain credit when they need it. The most flexible and negotiable of these is credit, and Ajimi has his most difficult time trying to compete on this

[GEIDAM]

128 erally which was discussed in the previous chapter. At times,
[125] quantitative data will be presented on a sample of 44 individuals, representing various selected social categories (see further definition of this sample given in Chapter 4).

1. Farming.

42 All land belongs, in theory, to the Shehu and is distributed by Lowans through the authority given them by the Shehu. A man living in the town of Geldam has a right to land surrounding the town, should he wish to make a farm. Such land becomes his in the sense that no one else can farm there, and it is inherited
[65] by his children like other forms of property. Any man who pays the property tax (hara'ji) in Geldam has a right to land. A newcomer to the town who desires land to farm asks a Lowan for a
[311] plot of land. Since all farm land up to two miles from the edge of the town is farmed by those previously settled in the town, land given to newcomers is uncleared brush far from the town itself. However, by paying a sum to the Lowan, a man may be assigned
[662] land which is much closer and therefore more desirable. Unused sites become available when people leave Geldam.

House sites come under the same provisions as farm land. If a man wishes to build a house in Geldam he must first ask the permission of the Lowan in whose ward he seeks to build his house. If he wishes to build on unoccupied land he must pay a
• [435] sum to the Lowan. The sum may vary from three to ten shillings, depending on the man's means. A man can sell a house which he

[GEIDAM]

42 has built, as it was built through his labor or his money.

- [435] Since there is great pressure for desirable house sites, an old house which is no longer worth much but is located on a good site will be sold for an amount far exceeding the value of the house itself. To all intents and purposes the owner is selling the land on which the house stands. Fishing sites along the river are under the "ownership" of the Lowans, and sites are given to people to use. Fishing sites are inherited but may not be sold.

425 As was pointed out earlier, land is increasingly viewed as
178 a commodity which can be bought and sold. Original Kanuri ideas about land have been undergoing change. Just as house sites within the town are sold, so too farm land is sold under certain conditions. The legality of these proceedings, according to Kanuri law, is still somewhat vague. A stranger coming to Geidam will be given land to farm only if he intends to remain in Geidam and will pay his haraji there. A Geidam man who moves elsewhere, and does not intend to return, will consequently be paying his haraji in the new town where he will settle. He forfeits the rights which he held to farmland in Geidam. Nor may he sell that land except under special conditions. However, one Geidam man may give, rent or sell his farm land to another Geidam man. Both, of course, continue to pay haraji in Geidam. According to the Alkali of Geidam, sale of farm land is legally viewed in the following manner: if a man's father worked a piece of land and he in turn inherited that land, his possession of the

[GEIDAN]

Western world. As is obvious from the above, it centers in a series of relationships which a group of important and wealthy Kanuri traders have established with the European trading companies of the town. It involves a network of tradesmen, who fall into distinct classes in terms of their wealth and importance. At the one end are the canteen operators, wholesalers who have large sums of credit extended to them and are the heads of large households. At the other end are the small retailers, with little wealth of their own and still less credit, who travel from market to market with their goods for sale.

6. Internal trade.

Internal, or regional trade, represents still another type of trade, distinct from either local or from external trade. The trade in kola nuts is an example of this type of trade. Kola nuts are grown only in the south of Nigeria, and do not grow at all in the Northern Region; however, all Kanuri, men and women, adults and children alike, chew them. They are imported in bulk by Hausa and Kanuri middlemen, and transported to Geidam by truck. Because of the transport problem during rainy season, the price of kola nuts fluctuates widely according to the season, much more widely than any other item sold in the market. Middlemen who buy several hundred-weight bags of kola nuts at a time are called goroma; they sell only in bulk. Goroma sell to other middlemen who come directly to their homes to buy large quantities, which they in turn transport by donkey to the more remote villages which the trucks can not visit directly.

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648 political organization was the activities of the touring officer who might, by contacting local complaints, discover a necessity for reform which could bring British power into play in the Bornu political structure.

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This relatively stable accommodation of the 1930's revealed, by such examples as the Mobbar case, has been upset by recent events in the post World War II period. The rapid rise in the price paid for groundnuts (the cash crop) from £3 to £11 per ton in 1946 caused the Resident to report "we are witnessing an economic change . . . possibly a revolution . . . for the farmer is now in command of a ready supply of cash . . . and for the first time the peasant has in his hands more money than he knows how to spend." ⁽¹⁾ Again in 1947 he comments, "money is pouring into the hands of the people and there is nothing for them to spend it on . . . Money is available in great quantity for development but we can do little for want of staff and materials." ⁽²⁾ The post-war boom aided and abetted by the mustering out pay of the returning soldiers had hit Bornu unprepared. ⁽³⁾

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In actual fact, there was not so much confusion on the part of the peasant over what to do with his new found wealth as there was on the part of the administration as to what to do with theirs. The trading companies quickly expanded both import and export facilities to meet the rapid increase in income and consumption. There is no indication of inability to spend money either in the published figures of Nigerian commerce, or in the memories of contemp-

(1) Annual Report Bornu Province; 1946

(2) Annual Report Bornu Province; 1947

(3) Fedlar, P.J. A Study of Income and Expenditure in Northern Nigeria, in Africa 18, 259-271, 1948.

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571 the surest safeguards against labour shortages due to sudden (and common) divorces. This is the reason why people with longer associations in one place, and stronger ties of kinship in the community are less vulnerable economically to the high divorce rate than newcomers, or those with their primary social ties outside Magumeri. The exception to this generalization is, of course, the upper class who can either afford to use wage labour, or utilize the subservience of followers.

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435 Variations in price bring about fluctuations in farming activities. A higher price of millet one year induces a somewhat greater interest by rural and urban dwellers in the production of food grains. On the other hand, an increase by Government of groundnut prices paid to producers causes greater interest and some increase in acreage devoted to cash cropping. Several city dwellers who had not farmed for periods of two to six years told the writer that they were either going to go themselves, or send a subordinate, to the bush the following year to raise millet, because the 1956-57 price had risen as high as 39/- to 41/- per bag.

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458 Besides this year to year fluctuation, there has been a steady rise in the Bornu economy over the past two decades. From 1938 (1) to 1957 the prices in millet and groundnuts have been as follows:

TABLE XIII

	Millet (to consumer) shillings per bag	Groundnuts pounds per ton to producer
1938	15	5
1957	30	33
Percentage increase	100%	660%

£ Maiduguri market (average)

£ General price for Bornu

(114) (1) Figures for 1938 taken from Economic Assessment Report (1938), file #3014, Bornu Provincial Government Office, Maiduguri. General prices for 1957 are taken from observations in the Maiduguri, Gaidan, Damaturu and Magumeri markets.

592 The net effect, productively, seems to be one of disunity since there are really three economic units within the one household. Cohesion is due to kinship and should trouble arise, legal, economic, or political, the unity within this compound, and with the others around it, to which its members are agnatically related, are observable immediately. Even the economic disunity is only partial, since Dolo often helps his older brother at the market, and both do farm work and run messages for their father.

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[423] Ka'anami has a bush farm to the south of Kagumeri village and three small plots in the nearby hamlet of Palongo where he used to live. His wife helps him to plant, hoe, and harvest the crop, as do [435] his brothers. In 1955 he harvested twelve bags of millet (cash value [432] £30/0/0) and four bags of groundnuts (cash value £11/0/0). Thus his [251] agricultural production totalled £41/0/0, one-quarter of which he sold for cash, and three-quarters of which he stored for consumption.

322 Many (but not all) of the men in Ka'anami's agnatic kinship group are calabash makers. This consists of buying dried, raw, half gourds, scraping the insides smooth, and carving designs on the [412] outer surface with hot irons. The tools are simple, wood-handled iron [372] blades, obtained from the blacksmith, and the only other material necessary is charcoal for the fire, which is extremely cheap.

322 During the dry season, Ka'anami makes on the average two 433 calabashes per day on Fridays and Saturdays, and this ranges from one 443 to three, or on the average about four per week. Sunday he attends the Kagumeri market and sells his wares. He buys his raw calabashes from the Thursday market (Ngubura) and does not work much on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday, except to do commissions for people who give him special orders. He may also attend nearby markets on Monday or Tuesday

443 if he has not sold all his wares at the Magumeri Sunday market. This
322 works out to approximately sixteen calabashes per month which he pro-
433 duces for market sales. By questioning and observation, it was calcu-
lated that he gets private orders for another fifteen, making a total of
thirty-one calabashes per month. During four months of the wet season,
he does not produce for the market at all, but takes private orders
which he estimates at twenty a month. Using these figures, his yearly
production of calabashes comes to two hundred and ninety-seven.

435 The raw material costs him one shilling per calabash (cost
of charcoal is negligible) and his selling price runs from 3/3 to 5/-
or about 4/ on the average. This gives him a net profit of about 3/-
434 per unit product. Thus his yearly returns on his craft work bring him
a cash income of approximately £45.0.0.; when this is added to his crop
production Ka'anami's annual income in cash and kind can be placed at
£86.0.0.

461 The work pattern described here is not a strenuous one. Be-
sides his farmwork, Ka'anami could no doubt produce more calabashes if
he worked more rapidly and for longer hours. However, to obtain his
living in Bornu at present this is not necessary. Ka'anami likes his
present life. He enjoys sitting in an entrance hut in his own quarter
of town, with friends and relatives, talking, joking, gossiping and
moralizing about rural events. Indeed, a casual, rather than a careful
look into his life, might easily persuade the observer that Ka'anami
spends all his time sitting around in the shade talking and listening
to friends and relatives. When working, he often sits around a common
fire with other calabash makers, talking, or singing softly with his
fellow craftsmen (most of whom are his agnatic relatives). Even when
working alone, friends come and chat with him as he carves the designs

241 small plots of their own at the same time on which they hope to grow cash crops. In 1955, Mala Bukar obtained ten bags of millet and three of groundnuts. Cash value of this crop at prevailing prices is £20.0.0.

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592 Mala Bukar does no actual farm work himself. His apprentices and wives (never working together at the same time and place, plant, hoe and harvest his crop. He does give some directions at the beginning of these operations and he decides on the planting and harvesting dates. The apprentices make the farm work of the wives less essential in this case than is usual. This gives these women a great deal more free time, especially in the wet season, than almost any other married women in town, with the exception of the head dyer's wives. This man also has several apprentices. Mala Bukar's wives spend their productive energies in cooking, bringing water for the household, and selling the hooves of slaughtered animals which their husband gives them as a source of private income for themselves.

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[443] Since Mala Bukar's work schedule is tied to the availability of animals for slaughter, it appears at first glance to have a random quality. Exceptions to this are his rigid adherence to Friday as a day of prayer, or at least, no slaughter, and Sunday which is the Magumeri market day. However, he may butcher a sheep or a goat on the spot on Sunday if the selling is brisk and animals are to be had. Trips to other markets in the vicinity are dependent upon his immediate stocks of meat, and upon what he hears about demand at other markets.

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434 For six months of the year he deals only in sheep and goats (this is not true of butchers at larger centres, where many people can afford beef). One goat costs from 31/- to 40/- and he prepares and sells on the average four per week, at a profit of 2/- to 4/- each, i.e. an average profit of 3/- each or 12/- per week. Sheep cost him usually

231 from 20/- to 30/-, and he claimed that his return on a sheep was the
463 same as that on a goat. Since he sells about two of these per week
435 during the dry season, we can estimate his sheep profit at 6/- per
434 week. Thus for the six months of the year when the nomads are not in
the Magumeri vicinity, Mala Bukar gets a cash income from meat sales
of approximately 18/- per week (£23.0.0.).

When selling the hides of these animals, he received 1/6d.
to 2/- per goat hides and 2/- to 4/- for a sheep skin. Using the above
figures and taking median prices, we can calculate an additional in-
come of £12.0.0. for this period.

For the other six months, around the rainy season, when
the cattle nomads come north, he kills very few sheep and goats, but
butchers about four to six cows per week at a profit of 10/- to 12/-
per cow. Taking median values this gives him an approximate income
from this activity of £71.0.0. The hides from this work bring between
4/- and 7/6d. per skin and Mala Bukar felt that 5/6d. was the price
he most often received. This gives an approximate income of £36.0.0.
for cowhide per year. He also received about 1/- per week "commission"
because of his role as head butcher, from the sale of hides belonging
to other Magumeri butchers (i.e. £3.0.0. per year). This estimation
of Mala Bukar's annual craft work puts its total value to him at about
£167.0.0.

434 However, he does not actually take in all this income as
[452] cash earnings. Many people take meat from him on credit, and others
come round when he is killing an animal and beg some gratis. He com-
plained of this loss and asked the writer repeatedly to take it into
account when calculating annual sales and profits. He felt that if he
could have in cash value the amount of meat he was not paid for, either

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[782] where cooked food is sold, or at ceremonial gatherings when there is generally more meat present in the food, due to the practice of killing a goat or a sheep at almost all periodic religious ceremonies and rites de passage. Rice, wheat, guinea-corn, maize, boiled roots and leaves, squashes, cucumber, tomatoes, okra, groundnuts, milk, chicken, butter, cooked meats, and millet beer brewed by pagans are also periodic but small additions to the normal peasant diet. (1)

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In the survey sample the average amount consumed per day per capita was 1.24 saka (2) with almost the entire range (except for two cases) running from one to one and a half saka per person. Using the saka as roughly 1.6 lbs. of millet (it varies in size during the year) this means that for the most part the rural peasant eats 1.6 to 2.4 lbs. of millet per day with a mean intake of 1.9 lbs. per person. The price of millet in Magumeri (1955-57) varied from 22/- to 20/- per bag (120 saka), but remained for long periods at 25/- per bag. It follows then that for the period 1955-57 the average rural household of 3.9 (from the sample survey) or roughly four persons, required at least twenty-five bags of millet per year or about thirty-one pounds sterling in cash value at the prevailing market prices, as a minimum subsistence amount for their millet needs.

[146] (1) From tests done in other sections of Northern Nigeria, it is estimated that the average peasant diet in the region as a whole, varies between 2400-2900 calories per day, with a general deficiency in proteins and vitamins, see Nicol, B.C., Nutrition in Nigeria, British Journal of Nutrition, Vol. 3 (1943) 25-43.

[804] (2) This was corroborated in the budget data. A saka is a small gourd which is used as the standard measure in buying and selling small quantities of grain, beans and nuts. Four saka equal one darum (a medium-sized calabash); four darum equal one sa (a large calabash), and there are 7.5 to 7.8 sa per buhu or large bag of grain, beans or nuts, i.e. about 120 saka per buhu. Saka of millet were weighed, measured and averaged to obtain English equivalents.

In Maiduguri, there
443 is an Alkali court within the confines of the market area which handles
[698] all cases occurring in the market. Each category of goods or services sold has its own section and, as in town planning, the butcher section is almost always to leeward (southwest) of the market. Market fees for stalls are exacted in the larger centres such as Maiduguri and Nguru. In Magumeri, stalls seemed to be allotted on a "first come, first served" basis except that sellers always take up positions in the particular section of the market given over to their commodity or service.

In Magumeri on non-market days, there are daily stalls in various parts of the town where sundries such as kerosene, cigarettes, flashlight batteries, sugar, small quantities of meat, grain, vegetables and cooked foods can be obtained. That these supplies are limited is indicated by the shortage which obtains if some larger assemblage

[123] of people are meeting in town between market days. One of the writer's
• [435] "followers" (tada njima) had the privilege of taking cigarettes from the former's house stores during ceremonies when town supplies were depleted and prices rose ten to fifteen per cent above normal. The cigarettes were returned in kind on market day when they could be purchased by the follower at standard prices.

[162] In larger centres, such as Maiduguri, Gaidam and Nguru, where the population is over ten thousand, the presence of larger numbers of full-time specialists necessitates that the market remain open
[805] every day. However, the weekly tradition still obtains even in these places in that the day upon which the market used to be held weekly is still its most active and populous occasion, and the market is still referred to by its old weekly day name. Thus in Maiduguri, the Monday market is held every day although on Monday it still attracts many more people and goods than any other day of the week.

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The price mechanism is so nearly uniform for any one commodity on any one market day (and often for months at a time), that a system of consensus is implied. And yet to the best of the writer's knowledge no self-consciously organized price setting is practised in the Bornu markets. When there is room for fluctuation, price seems to emerge as a norm which results from the interaction of buyers to sellers, and sellers to sellers, through buyers. It should be remembered that all sellers of one commodity are located together in the market. They may be seated under a tree, as are the women who sell cooked foods, or in a line under a common set of stick and mat shelters, or in a common section under several shelters like the tailors and sellers of cloth. What is important here is that sellers of any one commodity can overhear what prices are being charged to buyers. The early morning sellers, if alone, may have no norm and consequently, may haggle with buyers for quite some time over price unless they wish to sell all their wares early in order to transact other business; drink beer, visit friends and so on. As more sellers arrive, most buyers check prices with all sellers of the same commodity before making a purchase. (If prices are constant and the item is sold by the measure, then the various measures used by the different sellers are carefully inspected so that any smaller measuring vessels may be avoided). From these practices a norm very quickly emerges which lasts almost the entire market day, given a plentiful supply of the commodity. If, however, the item becomes scarce then individual sellers, realising that some of their competitors are out of stock, or have left the market, ⁽¹⁾ raise prices. Contrarily, if the end of market day is approaching and stocks are high, prices can be

(1) Some commodity sellers with slightly more money were observed to buy out one or more of their competitors early in the day in order to control supplies and prices for that day more easily.

443 pushed down by a nonchalant buyer with an anxious seller whose sales
• 435 for that day have been low.

This above description has exaggerated the price fluctuations to some extent. With many items, prices hold as constants for long periods and become an institutionalized part of the market. Thus a box of sugar cubes is one shilling and only very rarely did this price ever vary in the entire period of the field work. Even with prices that did vary, it is the writer's opinion that European travellers and commentators on Africa have overstressed the haggling up and down variability of prices in African markets because of their own experiences. Certainly, market sellers like to haggle over price and do so with all the enjoyment of the hardened poker player bluffing at cards. However, only to the European, who is conceived of as infinitely wealthy, do prices range so widely. When the writer attended his first markets, sellers haggled wildly and prices ranged enormously to him and to his wife. However, with time, the "real" prices were learned and the range within which haggling could take place narrowed significantly. If the writer then attended a new market where he was unknown, except as a European, then the range widened again and sometimes the seller would refuse to come anywhere near the "real" price claiming in Kanuri to his associates and the world in general that a European should pay more than an African. Friends always instructed the writer on the "real" price, telling him not to allow a price to be raised simply because he was a European. This "real" price is something which can be easily overlooked in an open market where haggling is the format of the buyer-seller relationship. Bartering may range widely or narrowly, but the experienced buyer and seller both know quite well, within a very small margin, where the final price will be set. This is why the really tenacious bartering comes at

443 the very end of the haggling. Thus it may take only two or three minutes to narrow a seller down from fifteen shillings to something around five; but will it be 5/6d or 4/6d; 4/9d or 5/3d; or 5/- even? - this last seesaw in pricing may take fifteen or twenty minutes. For although norms of price may be set for market day or longer on any commodity, there is always a small range of a few pennies around the norm which can be called the "real" price. This is not a single price, but really a range within which serious haggling takes place.

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221 Finally, it should be noted that price in Bornu vary with the seasons. In general, the harvest period from November to the end of December is a time of plenty, while July and August, the growing season, is a time of shortage. Prices on all commodities, except food, fall during the wet season when incomes are at their lowest and men are taking time off from their dry season activity to tend their fields. They then rise around the harvests when cash crops are sold and money is more plentiful. Thus the Maria Theresa dollar can be bought for 6/9d to 7/- in July, but goes up as high 8/- to 9/- in November after the [262] harvests. Food is scarce during the wet season, surplus sellers are short (some even stop selling) and prices of bulk (per 200 lbs. bag) rise when other prices are falling. Similarly when other commodities are rising in price after the harvest, food, which is plentiful, falls in value.

The Organization of Trade

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At the local level in Bornu, trade is handled by retailers. Under this heading come sellers of food items, cooked and uncooked foods, sundries, medicine, charms, medical services, builders, etc. With one

438 guri from Jos, Kano and other parts of Nigeria.
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Ajimi regularly obtains his nuts from four of these traders, all of whom he visits, and all of whose goods he inspects and prices before he decides where to place his order. He strongly asserts that his primary criterion in making the decision as to where to buy is the quality of the nuts. Two of the suppliers are Kanuri, one of whom owns his own lorries; the other two are Hausa. Ajimi has gone to other suppliers in the past but could not, at the time of this study, remember their names. By going to the same supplier over and over again with his uncle's money, he builds up confidence, and has on several occasions obtained an extra kwando on credit from one of the Kanuri suppliers, the profits of which he kept entirely for himself.

- 435 Although there is some variation in price, it generally
438 occurs at the retail level, while for bulk shipments cash prices re-
442 main fairly constant, and it is quantity which varies with supply, quality and demand. Thus £20.0.0 is generally the price for a kwando of kola-nuts (a large raffia rope-bound package). A kwando contains seven thousand to eight thousand nuts depending upon their size, quality and the state of the market at any particular time. After returning to Magumeri, Ajimi generally gets back about £32.0.0 per kwando and returns the money, plus half the profits (i.e. £6.0.0) to Alkali Bukar. This buying and selling procedure takes him between thirteen to seventeen days or roughly two weekly market cycles.

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[366] He wholesales his nuts in the Magumeri area and regularly attends the Magumeri (Sunday), Camiran (Thursday),⁽¹⁾ and Ardoram (Monday) markets.

- (1) He avoids the more usual Thursday market at Ngubura and attends the Gajiram market because it has no motor road, and he finds less competition and a smaller number of kola-nut wholesalers there than at Ngubura.

442 camp stools, battery radios, talk of politics and city life enliven the
369 rural scene.

442 Malam Mina buys for his mai gida, Alhaji Ali, a Kanuri trad-
443 er in Maiduguri who has a retail store or "canteen" as it is called
452 locally. The mai gida gives Malam Mina cigarettes, flashlight batteries,
perfumes, etc., for the latter's teber (table) or booth which a younger
[405] brother runs for him in Maiduguri. Alhaji Ali obtains about ten scales
from a Levantine trader during the harvest season and gives them out to
his tada (boys) who go to the bush and buy the cash crop. Malam Mina
receives a straight commission of 12/- per ton of decorticated nuts and
as much profit as he can on the import items (mostly textiles) which
are also obtained on credit from his mai gida. He remarked how he had
only been with Alhaji Ali this one year, last year having bought for
another man who had a direct link to a European company. However, last
year he found that his buying price was £20.0.0 less per ton than other
[434] scale men, and his commission fell. In 1955 his commission (from re-
ceipt slips) was about £60.0.0 but he hoped to get around £75.0.0 or
£80.0.0 in 1956-57.

442 Malam Mina may, if it is possible, depress the price below
435 the buying price given to him. This causes no undue concern on the part
[455] of his mai gida in the city as long as his tonnage does not decline. He
also buys futures at 20/- to 25/- per bag, whenever he can, but would not
estimate how much of this he does.

441 It is interesting to note that Malam Mina has been taken on
571 by his new mai gida and given a trading role without the more usual per-
iod of general service and subordination, as in the case of the "boys"
[212] of Alkali Bukar. Here we have another example of specialization. Malam
Mina is an experienced scale man. He can read and record figures and
sign his name.